



Baby Dental Care FAQ

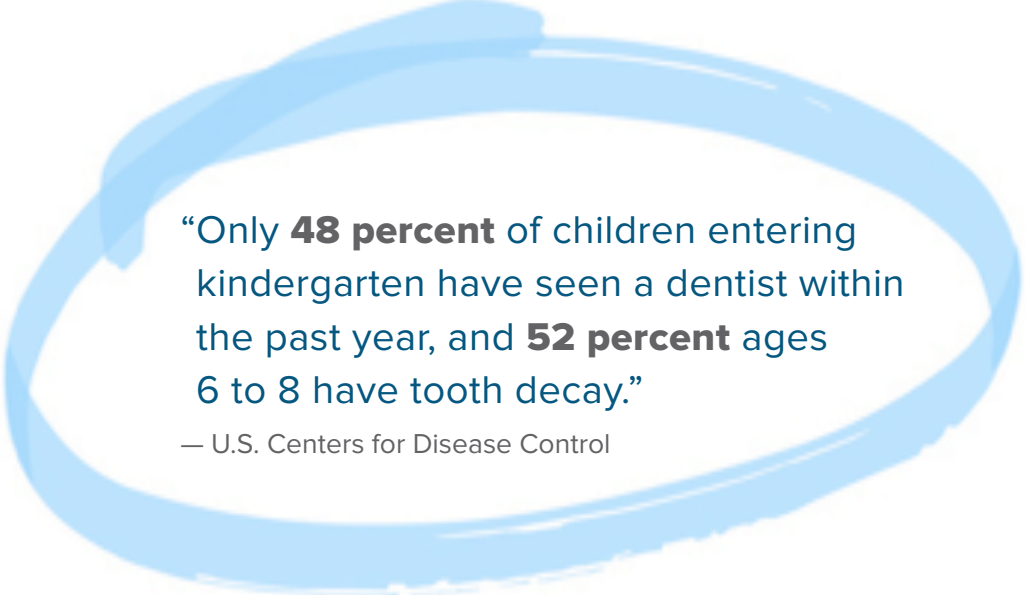
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Why Baby Dental Care Matters

**“RESEARCH
SHOWS THAT
CHILDREN
WHO DEVELOP
CAVITIES IN
THEIR BABY
TEETH ARE
MORE LIKELY
TO DEVELOP
CAVITIES AS
AN ADULT ...”**

— Colgate Oral Care Center

Proper baby dental care **minimizes** the risk of your children **developing cavities, gum disease** and other **oral health issues** that detract from their appearance, lower self-esteem, interfere with sleep and cause pain.



“Only 48 percent of children entering kindergarten have seen a dentist within the past year, and **52 percent** ages 6 to 8 have tooth decay.”

— U.S. Centers for Disease Control

FAQ 1:

What dental care steps should we take before our infant's baby teeth appear?



Caring for your infant's gums prevents bacteria from building plaque that can compromise baby teeth when they come in. At least twice a day, gently wipe your infant's gums with a moist cloth, piece of gauze wrapped around your finger, or a soft rubber/silicone finger brush. The best times to do this: after feedings and before bedtime.

Avoid giving your infant sugary liquids, as sugar encourages plaque buildup.

Fluoride helps build strong enamel when teeth are forming — if your water supply does not contain fluoride, consult your dentist or pediatrician to discuss alternatives.



FAQ 2:

What is the right way to brush our baby's teeth?



Start with the right tools — select a toothbrush with extra soft bristles and a small head, and toothpaste formulated for babies.

There are many toothbrushes designed specifically for infants. Brush at least twice a day, and always first thing in the morning and before bedtime. Brush gently, and replace the toothbrush as soon as the bristles appear worn.

The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry recommends a cavity-prevention, fluoride toothpaste with the baby's first tooth, but only use a rice-grain dab of toothpaste with each brushing.

When brushing your baby's teeth, patience is a virtue! If your child becomes agitated, try singing, letting him/her play with a toy — or simply wait for a better time.



FAQ 3:

What about thumb sucking and pacifiers?



Thumb sucking is normal in infants and is usually not a problem unless it persists past age 4. If your baby is still thumb sucking at age 2, it's time to start discouraging it.

A pacifier is a good replacement for thumb sucking because it is easier to wean from your child. However, if you use a pacifier, do not dip it in honey or another sugary substance, as this can cause plaque buildup on the gums that can damage baby teeth as they come in.



FAQ 4:

Is breastfeeding or formula better for our baby's oral health?



Breast milk is certainly a very healthy option, as it tends to be easier for the baby to digest and contains vital nutrients and antibodies. However, **formula is also healthy** and for many families a more convenient/practical option.

While some studies show a correlation between breastfeeding and better oral health — particularly straighter tooth alignment — the results are not conclusive. The reason? Breastfeeding requires a more natural jaw and tongue movement than a bottle, which facilitates the proper development of the baby's oral cavity.

Avoid letting your baby go to bed with a bottle or breastfeeding at will — these practices allow milk to pool in the mouth, leading to an acid buildup that can damage gums and teeth.



FAQ 5:

When should we stop bottle-feeding?



When your baby reaches 9-12 months, it is time to start the transition from a bottle to a cup.

From an oral health perspective, be sure not to fill the cup with sugary liquids, as they promote gum disease and tooth decay. Water is always a good option, especially if your baby keeps the cup in the crib — other liquids, even milk, facilitate acid buildup in the mouth (see previous slide).





This presentation is brought to you by McLean DDS.

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